

Colonel Head, the Indian Agent, arrived at the agency headquarters and found the camp practically deserted as the majority of the remaining Indians was on their return to receive the gift and clothing.

In his journal that they made preparations to refuse the offer. With the first of the winter filtering through the surrounding country house and said that the Indians had suggested that the men leave the reservation. He instructed to tell the Indians, led by Chief Tabby, that at a slow walk, they would meet him and his band came into the commandant's dwelling.

When he had to find out what was the lieutenant to cover him while Chief Tabby and read Young's letter to the Indians, he agreed to meet peaceably with

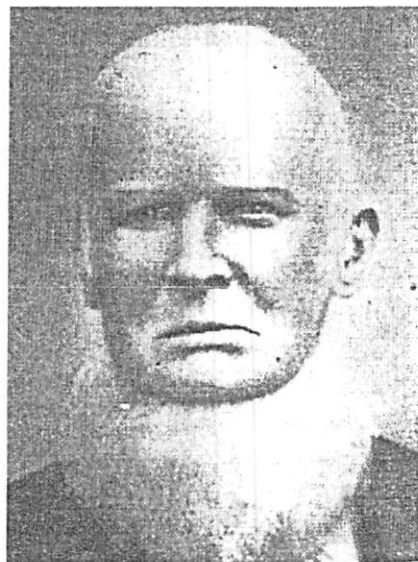
the Indians into the clearing in force. The majority of the men were in the east room, and Chief Tabby met in the north room by reiterating his many objections. Chief Wall attempting to pacify him. The terms laid down by Brigham Young for their mission, Wall's company of the settlers had given them up. The result of the wars and skirmishes, that was the end of the county.

He suffered very poor health. He died on the road in September 1869 when he was 68 years old. On September 18, 1869, and was buried at the same place as he was born to his wife Sarah three years later. His great career. He was a pioneer, legislator, peacemaker, confidant and father. After his death, the town's name to Wallsburg.

JOHN WESLEY WITT

John Wesley Witt was born February 10, 1829, in McLeansboro, Illinois, to Robert L. Witt and Dorcas Willis Witt. They were converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints soon after it was organized.

John Wesley was the second child of five children which included Kizzie Ann, John Wesley, Sarah Jane B., William B., and Mills. John's father was killed in 1834 during a dispute over some land. He was struck in the back by John Mennimer while they were working in the woods. About a year later, his widow Dorcas moved with her three surviving children to Far West, Missouri.



John Witt

While in Far West, seven-year-old John Wesley worked in a tobacco factory to help support the family. He had to walk several miles each day to the factory. While working there, he tried chewing some of the tobacco which made him very sick. After this early experience, he had no further desire for tobacco the rest of his life.

John Wesley Witt was baptized into the LDS Church in Far West in 1837. Two years later, the Saints were driven out of Missouri, and his family moved to Quincy, Illinois. About this time, John's mother Dorcas married Elisha Averett, and the family moved to Nauvoo. A son, William Averett, and a daughter who died in infancy were born to this union. Although John Wesley was only ten years old when the family moved to Nauvoo, he worked on the building of the Nauvoo Temple from the time it was started until it was completed. He tended the masons and did other odd jobs to help. He became acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, and he lived with the Hyrum Smith family for a few years.

John Wesley Witt left Nauvoo at the time of the expulsion of the Saints in 1846, and for the next four years he worked on river steamers on the Mississippi River. In 1850 he immigrated to Utah.

On March 27, 1851, he married seventeen-year-old Lovina Bigelow. John was twenty-two at the time. His wife Lovina was a sister of Lucy Bigelow, one of the wives of Brigham Young.

The young couple lived in Salt Lake City for about six months, then moved to Provo in the fall of 1851. Here they built one of the first adobe

houses in Provo. They lived there for eight years where five of their children were born.

In the fall of 1858, Brigham Young asked John and three other men to go to Provo Valley. They found the valley ideal for colonization, and in the spring of 1859, a group was organized to settle the valley. John decided to go earlier than the main group, and about April 26 or 27, 1859, when their baby Nancy Louisa was thirteen days old, the family set out to blaze a wagon trail through Provo Canyon. Daniel Bigelow accompanied them. The way was very hard over almost impassable trails along the swollen and winding Provo River. In some places the snow had obliterated the faint trail, making the journey extremely hazardous. At one turn of the river, near where the Wallsburg road was later built (the spot is now covered by the Deer Creek Reservoir), the wagon and all its contents tipped over into the swirling waters of the river. Daniel Bigelow helped lift the wagon box off the family and snatched the baby from the icy waters as she began to float downstream. John got the other children and his wife to the shore. There was not much left to salvage except for a bake oven, a sack of flour, and a chest of clothing. Their tools, seeds, wheat, and potatoes were lost. They felt very fortunate that they all escaped alive. Their spirits were undaunted as they took what was left and continued their journey. They arrived in the valley on April 29, 1859, and were among the first settlers to locate there.

Their first home was a rude dugout in the bank of Lake Creek where the creek made a turn and the bank was high. Later, they made a home of sod cut in rectangles and laid like bricks. It was located two hundred feet north and two hundred feet east of the gate which opened into the field at the corner of 3rd North and 4th West [Heber City]. They did not remain in this home very long. John immediately commenced to build a cabin. In those days there was a grove of trees standing where the Heber flour mill later stood, about a mile east of town. John cut the logs for the cabin from these trees. He built the first log cabin in the valley. Later, he built a sandstone house on the same lot on the northwest corner of 3rd North and 2nd West [Heber City]. The sandstone was cut from the quarry east of Heber City. His farm was 160 acres of well-drained, fertile land. Lake Creek passed through it and later a canal.

John also acquired about 1,500 acres in Lake Creek Canyon where he built a small reservoir, and below it he built a waterpowered sawmill. Today the reservoir is called Witt's Lake and is part of the Timberlakes subdivision.

Four years after the family moved to Heber City, one of his daughters (who had been saved from drowning in the Provo River when they first traveled to the valley) followed her father to the field where he was

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working. She fell in a creek and was drowned. They found the child with her clothes caught on a bush at the edge of the stream.

A daughter, Mary Susanna, describes her father: "He was about five feet ten inches in height, had a light complexion, and his average weight was 195 pounds. He was jolly and full of life and energy. He had but seven weeks of schooling in his life, but his mother taught him all she could in reading, spelling, and writing. He enjoyed his studies and reading very much. He was a lover of music, and in the later years of his life, he bought a little French accordian. It was about sixteen inches long, ten inches through, and seven inches wide. It was jet black with a fine polish and white pearl keys and had a beautiful clear tone. In the long summer evenings he would often sit out on the porch and play and sing such songs as 'Away Down South in Dixie' and 'Down by the Green Bushes My Mary Met Me.'

"My father loved sleigh riding with sleighbells. He had some fine horses, and he bought two or three beautiful buffalo robes from the Indians. We often went sleigh riding, and with the warm robes, we never felt like we were cold at all."

During the time of the Black Hawk Indian War, John Wesley Witt was actively engaged in military service in defense of the valley. He was commissioned a major in the Wasatch County Militia. Under the command of Witt, cavalry men scouted the mountains for signs of hostile Indians. He made a dashing figure as he led his men, dressed in a red shirt and wearing a broad-brimmed hat with a feather in it and carrying a sword about three feet long.

John owned and operated a store and an unofficial post office in Heber City in part of his home. He served as assessor and tax collector for Wasatch County at one time.

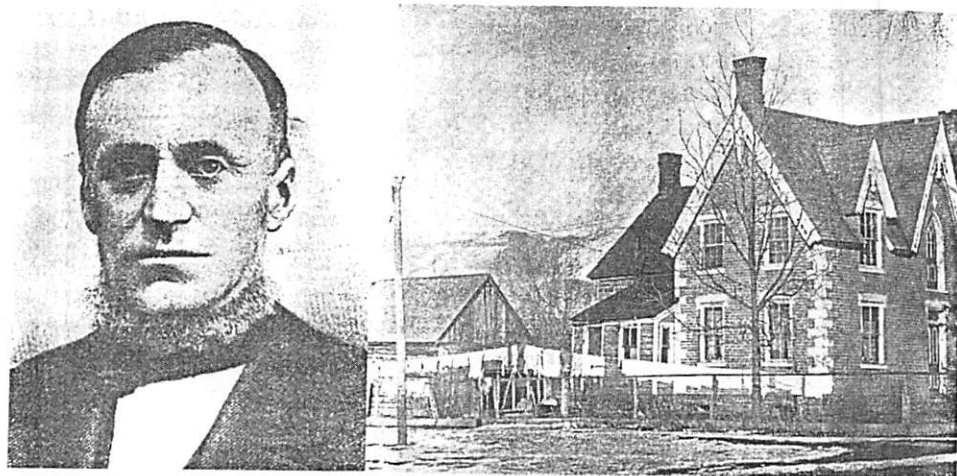
When the county was organized, John W. Witt was appointed probate judge by the Territorial Legislature. He held this position for twenty-six years until June 1, 1888. During his administration, some of the most important events in the history of Wasatch County occurred.

John Witt and his sons were primarily cattlemen. They raised hay on their land in the summer and fed it to their cattle in the winter. In the spring, their cattle and cattle belonging to other farmers, were driven to the rangeland east of Heber in the Strawberry Valley where the headwaters of Currant Creek, the Duchesne River, and Deep Creek are located. Usually, some of the Witt sons were with the cattle all summer watching over them. In the fall, the cattlemen held a roundup, driving the cattle back to Heber Valley to the corrals where they were separated according to the brands and earmarks and taken by their owners to their own fields. The Witt brand was Bar W on the left hip. The business was operated on a cooperative basis, which worked well as long as John was alive.

On November 1, 1869, John married a second wife, Martha Taylor, to whom was born six sons. He provided well for both wives, and each had her own home. Martha's sons were always included in financial matters as well as the children of Lovina.

He was appointed first counselor to Bishop Joseph S. Murdock in 1861, and whenever Church authorities visited Heber City, they were often entertained at his home. He was serving as a high councilman at the time of his death.

John Wesley Witt died June 30, 1907, at the age of seventy-eight and was buried in the Heber City Cemetery. He was the father of nineteen children, thirteen boys and six girls. At the time of his death he had forty-two grandchildren and seventeen great-grandchildren.⁸



John Crook, early settler and historian. His journal provided important information relating to the settlement of the valley. The John Crook home, constructed from brick manufactured at the Van Wagoner brick yards in Wasatch County, still stands today at 188 West 3rd South, Heber City.

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